

USDA State Technical Committee Meeting- MINUTES	October 21, 2020 <i>Via Microsoft Teams</i>
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ATTENDEES	
Adams, Dave	Roberts, John
Albers, Meredith	Roen, Harris
Alexander, Toby	Urffer, Kathy
Alvez, Juan	Keilbasa, Tom
Arace, Jill	Machin, B
Averill, Al	Massey, Elijah
Bahrenburg, Andrew	McLaughlin, Dan
Berry, Tom	Rhodes, Ron
Austin, John	Rupe, Marli
Gabos, Ben	Sims, Reed
Blodgett, Dave	Smith, Chris
Borders, Margaret	Sockdjou, Stephen
Buford, Joe	Stein, Carissa
Butler, Diane	Thurgood, John
Sinorakhoun, B	Webb, Henry
Braconnier, Meryl	Wetzstein, Heather
Byrne, Jennifer	Wilson, Phil
Campbell, Erica	Wilton, Wendy
Cibula, Stacy	Wudtke, Misti
Colby, Jen	
Damsell, Sarah	
Doering, Lorrie	
Drew, Vicky	
Eldridge, Bill	
Everhart, Nancy	
Farber, Jeff	
Faulkner, Josh	
Fleury, Jason	
Fowle, Margaret	
Fowler, Jeremy	
Gage, Nina	
Gray, Julia	
Hamelin, Paul	
Hayes, Kaitlyn	
Jacobs, Jake	
Johnson, Laura	
Laramée, Alisha	
McCann, Madeline	
Muir, Jim	

Obe Racicot, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, NRCS:

- Welcome to all and introductions made.

Vicky Drew, State Conservationist, NRCS:

- All offices are at Level II for COVID apart from Chittenden County, which is at Level I.
- Filled 26 positions in FY 2020 and now we are at our cap of 73.
 - Recently closed three Pathways positions.
 - Looking to hire a recent graduate for engineering in the St. Johnsbury office.
- Many challenges over the past year which included Covid, Conservation Desktop and C.A.R.T but we still managed to reach our obligation deadlines
- Engineering construction was down this year due to issues with getting materials due to Covid.
- There were 154 EQIP applications that were backlogged this year; they will be forwarded into FY 2021.
- Have not received our FY 2021 allocations yet; will get that out to partners once they are received. In the interim we are under a Continuing Resolution.
- Beginning a new Strategic Planning Process.
 - Will be working with FMP Consulting over the next few months to establish long term priorities.
 - Will be looking for feedback from employees and partners over the next two months.

Wendy Wilton, State Executive Director, FSA:

- Both CRP and CREP are moving forward after several years of no new enrollments or re-enrollments due to changes enacted in the 2018 Farm Bill. New enrollments can be taken if a waiver is granted to the potential applicant by the Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs (DAFP). Three waiver requests were submitted to DAFP this year and all three were granted.
- There had been concern for some time that Vermont was the only state that seemed to be affected by the enrollment eligibility due to the Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs), but there are indications from actions taken by headquarters that other states will soon be in the same situation as Vermont.
- The next step for FSA is to convene the program partners to get input on the process required to move forward with new enrollments to streamline it and be sure that all interested parties understand both the process itself and their role in it. Mid December is tentatively targeted to have these discussions as FSA staff is currently heavily involved in COVID support programs as well as their regular fall workload in delivering programs.
- The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) has been putting enormous pressure on field staff to roll out and deliver and CFAP 2 applications having just been opened up is running concurrently. Applications for both programs are being taken, processed and paid out as quickly as possible. CFAP 1 has put out over \$42 million so far to dairy, livestock, row crop, and speciality crop producers, including maple producers.

- FSA has submitted a request for a Secretarial Disaster Designation to Secretary Purdue and is awaiting a decision. Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine have all either already submitted or will be submitting similar requests. This designation allows FSA to open up a number of disaster programs such as the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), and give borrowers access to Emergency Loans.
- Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program signups opened on October 12 and close on December 11 which is also the deadline for CFAP 2 application, and the end of the time period covered by the Continuing Resolution.

Eileen Powers, FSA Agricultural Program Specialist:

- Responding to Andrew Bahrenburg's question about CRP waivers: The process was lengthy, having started in mid-June and the last waiver grant arriving at the eleventh hour for 2021 enrollments on September 30. The length of time it took to get the three waivers taken care of is at least in part indicative of it being the first time this process was navigated, both for the Vermont staff and the national headquarters staff. FSA is optimistic that subsequent waiver requests will be turned around in a more timely fashion. It was further explained that the waiver request is necessary because the 2018 Farm Bill makes land subject to Required Agricultural Practices ineligible to enroll unless a waiver is requested and granted. When granted, land within Vermont's 25 foot required watercourse buffer is subject to a 25% reduction in CRP rental rates for the life of the contract.
- Participation by county, showing number of contracts, contracts expiring at the end of FY21, acres enrolled and annual rental payments was presented.
- A number of contracts eligible to be re-enrolled were not due to issues such as long-term contract, selling land and financial concerns.
- Brief discussion on mid contract management and lack of cost sharing now available.
- John Thurgood, NRCS, working with FSA as well and feel we have a great grasp of the program and can move it along better to landowner.

Tom Berry, Senator Leahy Office Representative:

- Involved with current Supreme Court Nomination hearings.
- Working on Covid stimulus package; may be close to reaching an agreement.
- Continuing Resolution for appropriations is on until second week of December.
- Senate Committees are continuing work and several agriculture bills may be posted soon.
- Conservation legislation has been passed for the Land Water Conservation Fund.

Obediah Racicot, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, NRCS:

- Please refer to the attached "NRCS Farm Bill Programs Update" slide deck for the information presented. This report serves to record the decisions made by the Committee.
 - 2020 Contracting and financial information presented (slide 2, 3, 4)
 - 154 EQIP FA applications are backlogged from FY 2020 and will be moved into the current FY. (slide 5)

- Status of FB regulations (slide 6)
- **Established State priority resource concerns as follows: (slide 8)**
 - Water Quality:
 - Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss
 - Storage and handling of pollutants
 - Pesticide loss
 - Soil:
 - Wind and water erosion
 - Concentrated erosion
 - Soil quality limitations (soil health) – focus on organic matter
 - Habitat and Forestry:
 - Terrestrial habitat
 - Aquatic Habitat
 - Degraded plant condition
 - Concentrated erosion (trails and landings)
- **Established State Priority Geographic areas: (slide 9)**
 - Do not prioritize any specific watershed by name
 - Do prioritize 303(d) and TMDL watersheds
- **Established State Program and Resource Priorities: (slide 10)**
 - Significant contributor
 - Compliance w State environmental laws
- **Established the State Spending Plan as presented (Slide 12)**
 - There will likely be only be one sign up period for Farmsteads due to engineering work overload
 - Schedule is TBD for many ranking pools – too many unknowns now operating under interim national guidance and software rollouts
- Discussion on whether to set aside dollars for methane digesters. (slide 13)
 - Comments are to be submitted to both Vicky Drew and Obe before a final decision is made. **ACTION: Comments on Digesters due by November 30, 2020**
- **Approved Top-10 High Priority Practices (Slide 14)**
 - 393 - Filter strip
 - 340 – Cover Crop - all scenarios
 - 345 – Residue & Tillage Management – Reduced tillage
 - 391 – Riparian Forest Buffer
 - 512 – Pasture & Hay Planting (seeding down continuous corn)
 - 808 - Soil Carbon Amendment
 - 585 – Stripcropping
 - 590 - Nutrient Management – all scenarios
 - 612 – Tree / Shrub Establishment
 - 216 – Soil Health Test
- New EQIP Incentive Contracts will be offered in FY 2021; more information to follow. STC input will be required. (slide 15)
- RCPP update (Slide 18)
- Presented slide show on Easement Programs. (slide 20)

- 2020 Contracting and financial information presented (slide 21)
- ALE Workgroup:
 - **Approved: CART score of 70 for Threshold ranking (Slide 24)**
 - **Approved: no changes to the impervious surface limitations; currently set at 7%.** Discussion on whether to increase to 10% was brought up. (slide 26)
 - Approved: no changes to soil limitation criteria (slide 26)
- WRE Workgroup:
 - **Approved: no changes to existing ranking (slide 27)**
 - **Approved: use AWMA as valuation methodology (slide 29)**
 - **Pending:** Wetland Restoration Criteria Guidelines. (slide 30)
- New EWP Flood Plain Easement to be announced soon. (slide 31)

Joe Buford, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS:

- Presented slide show on Practice Payment Schedules. **Please refer to the slides for the majority of the information outlined below.**
 - FY 2021 rates will be updated by week's end.
 - Currently have no TSPs in system for CAP-116 Soil Heath.
- National Handbook of Conservation Practice Notice 170 and 171 is available.
 - Comments due by 11.27.2020.
 - Will work with staff to get information out to partners.
- CIG:
 - Set aside \$500K for FY 2020.
 - Three projects awarded for approximately \$402K.
 - We awarded approximately \$212K more than in FY 2019.
 - We will provide CIG overview training prior to the FY 2021 deadline date.
 - FY 2021 Questions:
 - Do we want to set aside dollars for a water quality project or a grazing/forestry/wildlife project?
 - Much discussion. Recommendations are to be submitted to Joe or Vicky within the week before a final decision is made.
 - We currently rank all proposals against each other equally.
 - Need Tech Reviewers for VT CIG applications. If you are interested, please contact Joe or Sandra Primard by 12.01.2020.
 - National Bulletin 300-20-21, NWQI:
 - Rock River was added for FY 2021.

Elijah Massey, RD USDA-Rural Development, Vermont's New and Beginning Farmer/Rancher (BFR) Coordinator (PowerPoint) provided an update on outreach to this target audience.

-Initiative includes coordination between RMA, NRCS, RD, and FSA. They are working on an outreach plan to increase awareness of USDA program for beginning farmers through targeted outreach and engagement. [A press release](#) about this effort was shared this summer on the VT NRCS website.

-A question about tax issues for USDA program participants was raised. Vicky Drew said that tax issues could be an issue for some of our customers. Jill Arace asked about the

opportunity to give feedback to USDA about the impacts of program design and barriers to beginning and underserved farmers having access to USDA benefits. Example is easement programs favoring larger landowners. Elijah encouraged feedback similar to Jill's and will work to carry communication to appropriate outlets. Vicky followed up and encouraged conservation partners to voice their concerns and issues.

Alisha Laramée, Association for Africans Living in Vermont (AALV), New Farms for New Americans (NFNA), recipient of new urban ag initiative grant. More details on the grant are here:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/vt/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD1639416>

Alisha indicated that AALV is very excited to receive this grant. She provided background on the non profit that serves resettled refugees. Learn more here: <https://www.aalv-vt.org/>.

This grant allows us the opp to work with a population of folks who we have known but haven't previously qualified for our assistance, and now I can draw from a larger pool of folks who are familiar with VT, who have had experience living here, and are engaged with NFNA. We aim to take the farmers to the next level, it's a capacity building/master gardener grant, working with a population that is unfamiliar with access to resources, the English language, etc. We wanted to create a core group of cultural liaisons and leaders in the communities in which I work (Congolese Somali, Bermudian, Burmese, Bhutanese, Nepoli farmers). 28-week curriculum will start in greenhouse moving into fall harvest and food preservation. These are farmers who have farmed their whole lives and have been farming in VT for 5 years, and so they have a strong knowledge in VT seasons, but could benefit from the next level of knowledge. They can participate more in farm programs and become mentors for their communities. "I can now reach a larger audience," Alisha said, "and be a voice for equity/inclusion, and so this blends nicely with what is going on nationally."

ACTION for January State Tech Meeting: (RCPP and CIG partner updates) Need to dedicate time to RCPP partners to provide project updates at the Jan. state tech committee meeting. Also would like Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) updates at this meeting too.

Next Meeting and ACTION: Jan 27, 2021, and *please provide feedback on meeting format (should we divide it up and not have an all day? Do you like the all-day format? Do you like in person (if possible) vs. virtual?)*

Vermont USDA State Technical Committee Meeting

October 21, 2020
9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., via Microsoft Teams
Meeting Link: <https://bit.ly/33mrJBU>



Welcome from NRCS 9:30-10:00	-Update on NRCS activities including a look back at FY 2020 and looking ahead to FY 2021	Vicky Drew , NRCS State Conservationist
Legislative Update 10:00-10:15 re-arranged 10:30 to 10:45	-Updates from Capitol Hill	Tom Berry (Leahy), Erika Campbell (Sanders), and Alex Piper (Welch)
FSA Update 10:15-10:45 re-arranged: 10:00 to 10:30	-CREP and CRP updates	Wendy Wilton , FSA State Executive Director
NRCS Financial Assistance Programs (EQIP/CSP/AMA) 10:45-11:30	-2020 Year in review – obligations and contracts and looking ahead to 2021 -Working Lands Subcommittee Report- -EQIP Incentives Program	Obediah Racicot , NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs
One HOUR FOR LUNCH		
NRCS Easement Programs (ALE/WRE/HFRP) 12:30-1:15	-ALE Subcommittee Report out Any changes to State policies: soil waivers, impervious surface limits Ranking input WRE Subcommittee Report-out Valuation methodology – AWMA update Ranking input	Obediah Racicot , NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs
Resource Conservation Update 1:15-2:00	-Science Advisory committee report-out (new practices, etc.) 2020 CIG update -NHCP Notice 171 Source Water Protection NWQI: Rock River CEAP/ACPF	Joe Buford , NRCS State Resource Conservationist 15 minute break
Partner Reports 2:15-2:45	-USDA's New Farmer Outreach Effort <i>-New Farms for New Americans: Improving Lands, Improving Lives</i> , new USDA Office of Urban Ag and Innovative Production grant recipient in Vermont	Elijah Massey , USDA Rural Development Business Programs Specialist and VT Beginning Farmer Coordinator Alisha Laramee , New Farms for New Americans/Association for Africans Living in Vermont, Programs Specialist
Final Discussion and wrap up 2:45-3:30	-Schedule next meeting (January 27, 2021)	Vicky Drew

Meeting Notes:

The meeting is divided into topical areas with times noted on the agenda, allowing participants to join at specific times, based on their interest of subject matter.

Use this link to connect to Teams:

<https://bit.ly/33mrJBU> Or call in to 1 636-352-2946 and use Conference ID: 743 206 076#

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Vermont CRP/CREP Program Participation as of October 20, 2020

County	Total Contracts	Non-CREP Contracts	Expiring in 2021	Acres	Annual Payments
Addison	92	6	17	952.11	\$81,257
Bennington	0	0	0	0.00	\$0
Caledonia	5	0	3	21.66	\$2,615
Chittenden	21	0	4	105.53	\$16,938
Essex	7	0	1	26.10	\$2,410
Franklin	67	0	3	451.21	\$70,617
Grand Isle	0	0	0	0.00	\$0
Lamoille	20	0	3	62.77	\$9,290
Orange	32	0	12	113.05	\$12,631
Orleans	27	0	1	224.33	\$31,782
Rutland	40	2	5	251.56	\$27,773
Washington	1	0	0	2.90	\$290
Windham	9	1	0	36.82	\$5,885
Windsor	1	0	0	1.60	\$150
Totals	322	9	49	2249.64	\$261,638

Contact: Eileen Powers, Ag Program Specialist, Vermont FSA
eileen.powers@usda.gov

Summary of 2020 NRCS Financial Assistance Programs - October 1, 2020 - FINAL

CART Ranking Pool		CART Category	Obligations	Number of Contracts	Percentage Funding
Statewide EQIP	Farmstead	Statewide	\$ 5,073,996	17	50%
	Cropland	Statewide	\$ 1,381,493	41	14%
	Grazing	Statewide	\$ 662,655	18	7%
	Forestry & Wildlife	Statewide	\$ 913,095	43	9%
	Specialty Crop	Statewide	\$ 78,987	3	1%
	Conservation Activity Plans	Forestry CAPs	\$ 277,627	126	3%
		All Other CAPs	\$ 53,713	14	1%
	Seasonal High Tunnel	Zone	\$ 270,836	23	3%
	Beginning Farmer	Beginning Farmer	\$ 373,386	19	4%
	Socially Disadvantaged	Socially Disadvantaged	\$ 85,925	3	1%
National EQIP	National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)	East Creek	\$ 443,006	2	4%
		Hungerford Brook	\$ 102,500	1	1%
	Certified Organic	Statewide Certified Organic	\$ 24,089	3	0.2%
		Statewide Organic Transition			
	On-Farm Energy	Statewide	\$ 33,718	1	0.3%
Conservation Innovation Grants	Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)	N/A	\$ 402,810	3	4%
	Total EQIP Obligated 2020		\$ 10,177,836	317	
	Total EQIP Received		\$ 10,615,000.00		
	Obligation Rate		96%		

CART Ranking Pool		CART Category	Annual Obligations	Annual Contracts	Total Project Obligations
RCPP-EQIP 2014 Farm Bill	2015 - VT DEC - Lake Champlain	Farmstead Pool	\$ 1,871,048	25	\$ 6,808,543
		Forestry Erosion Pool	\$ 106,690	10	
	2015 - Long Island Sound	Soil Health	\$ -	0	\$ 675,600
		Resiliency	\$ 59,317	2	
	2016 - OCNRCD - Lake Mempremagog	Project Area	\$ 59,415	3	\$ 67,066
	2017 - Cold Hollow Woodlots	Project Area	\$ 35,510	1	\$ 229,943
	2018 - VACD Nutrient Management II	Project Area	\$ -	0	\$ 233,334
	2018 - TNC - Connecting the Connecticut	Project Area	\$ -	0	\$ 250,000
	Total RCPP Obligated 2020		\$ 2,131,980	41	

CART Ranking Pool	CART Category	Obligations	Number of Contracts	
Statewide AMA	Cropland	Statewide	\$ 353,104.00	30
Total AMA Obligated		\$ 353,104.00	30	
Total AMA Received		\$ 382,000.00		
Obligation Rate		92%		

CART Ranking Pool		CART Category	Obligations	Number of Contracts	
StatewideCSP	CSP - Grassland Conservation Initiative	Statewide	\$ -	0	
	CSP Renewals	Statewide	\$ 34,979.00	1	
	CSP Classic (all types)	AgLand	\$ 454,605.00	18	
		Forestry	\$ 157,773.00	18	
	Total CSP Obligated		\$ 647,357.00	37	
	Total CSP Received		\$ 770,000.00		
	Obligation Rate		84%		

Summary of 2020 NRCS Easement Programs - September 17, 2020

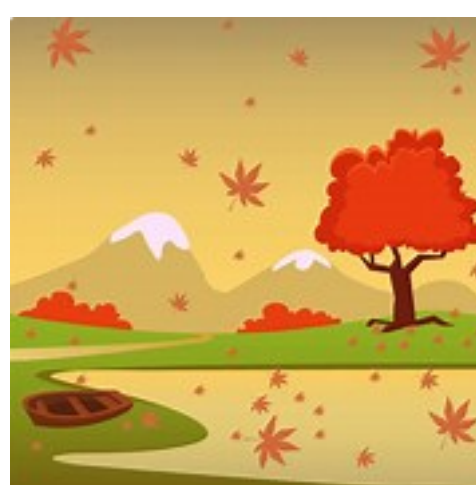
CART Ranking Pool		CART Category	Obligations	Number of Parcels	Acres Enrolled
Statewide ACEP-ALE	ACEP-ALE	Statewide	\$ 2,943,500.00	18	2,390
	ACEP-WRE (all costs)	Statewide	\$ 1,645,888.00	2	432
RCPP-ACEP 2014 Farm Bill	2015 - VT DEC Lake Champlain - ALE	Project Area	\$ 434,500.00	2	510
	2015 - VT DEC Lake Champlain - WRE	Project Area	\$ -	0	0
RCPP-HFRP 2014 Farm Bill	2015 - Long Island Sound - HFRP (all costs)	Project Area	\$ 204,228.00	2	388
	Total Easement Funds Obligated		\$ 5,228,116.00	24	3,720

Total of all funds obligated in Fiscal Year 2020

\$ 18,538,393.00



United States Department of Agriculture
10/1/2020 OSR





Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Service
United States Department of Agriculture

October 21, 2020 State
Technical Committee



NRCS Farm Bill Programs Update



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Financial Assistance Programs

(Working Lands)

10:45 – 11:30



2020 was a bumpy year




- \$18.5 million in total financial assistance obligations
- \$10.2 million in EQIP
- \$2.1 million RCPP-EQIP
- \$647,000 in CSP
- \$5.2 million in easements



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2020 Summary



Summary of 2020 NRCS Financial Assistance Programs - October 1, 2020 - FINAL					
CART Ranking Pool		CART Category	Obligations	Number of Contracts	Percentage Funding
Statewide EQIP	Forestland	Statewide	\$ 5,073,996	17	50%
	Cropland	Statewide	\$ 1,581,493	41	14%
	Grassland	Statewide	\$ 661,055	18	7%
	Forestry & Wildlife	Statewide	\$ 813,093	43	3%
	Specialty Crop	Statewide	\$ 76,887	3	1%
	Conservation Activity Place	Forestry CAPs	\$ 277,627	126	3%
		All Other CAPs	\$ 55,713	14	1%
		Zone	\$ 270,834	23	3%
		Beginning Farmer	\$ 273,584	10	4%
		Socially Disadvantaged	Socially Disadvantaged	\$ 85,835	3
National EQIP	National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)	Dart Creek	\$ 443,066	2	4%
		Hungerford Brook	\$ 102,500	1	1%
	Certified Organic	Statewide Certified Organic	\$ 24,889	3	0.2%
	On-Farm Energy	Statewide Organic Transition	\$ 33,718	1	0.3%
	Conservation Innovation Grants	Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)	N/A	\$ 402,810	3
Total EQIP Obligated 2020			\$ 10,177,836	317	
Total EQIP Received			\$ 10,615,000.00		
Obligation Rate			96%		
CART Ranking Pool		CART Category	Annual Obligations	Annual Contracts	Total Project Obligations
RCPP-EQIP 2014 Farm Bill	2015 - VT DEC - Lake Champlain	Forestland Pool	\$ 1,871,046	25	\$ 6,200,543
		Forestry Easement Pool	\$ 190,000	10	\$ 675,400
	2015 - Long Island Sound	Soil Health	\$ -	0	\$ -
		Resiliency	\$ 36,317	2	\$ 47,965
	2015 - CONROD - Lake Management	Project Area	\$ 36,410	1	\$ 219,943
	2017 - Gold Hollow Woodlots	Project Area	\$ 36,310	1	\$ 219,943
	2018 - NRCS Northern Management II	Project Area	\$ -	0	\$ -
	2018 - 1861 - Connecting the Greenbelt	Project Area	\$ -	0	\$ -
Total RCPP Obligated 2020			\$ 2,131,980	41	
CART Ranking Pool		CART Category	Obligations	Number of Contracts	
Statewide AMA	Cropland	Statewide	\$ 353,104.00	30	
Total AMA Obligated			\$ 353,104.00	30	
Total AMA Received			\$ 382,000.00		
Obligation Rate			92%		
CART Ranking Pool		CART Category	Obligations	Number of Contracts	
Statewide CSP	CSP - Grassland Conservation Initiative	Statewide	\$ -	0	
	CSP - Forestland	Statewide	\$ 34,375.00	1	
	CSP - Grassland (all types)	Agland	\$ 484,000.00	18	
		Forestry	\$ 187,700.00	11	
Total CSP Obligated			\$ 647,357.00	37	
Total CSP Received			\$ 770,000.00		
Obligation Rate			84%		
Summary of 2020 NRCS Easement Programs - September 17, 2020					
CART Ranking Pool		CART Category	Obligations	Number of Parcels	Acres Enrolled
Statewide ACEP-ALE	ACEP-ALE	Statewide	\$ 2,243,500.00	18	2,390
	ACEP-WRE (all costs)	Statewide	\$ 1,445,838.00	2	432
RCPP-ACEP 2014 Farm Bill	2012 - VT DEC Lake Champlain - ALE	Project Area	\$ 434,500.00	2	530
	2012 - VT DEC Lake Champlain - WRE	Project Area	\$ -	0	0
RCPP-HFRP 2014 Farm Bill	2012 - Long Island Sound - HFRP (all costs)	Project Area	\$ 204,238.00	2	388
Total Easement Funds Obligated			\$ 5,228,116.00	24	3,720
Total of all funds obligated in Fiscal Year 2020			\$ 18,538,393.00		
 United States Department of Agriculture 10/1/2020 09:58					

2020 Summary (planned vs actual)

Summary of 2020 NRCS Financial Assistance Programs - October 1, 2020 - FINAL						Planned 2020 Funding	
CART Ranking Pool	CART Category	Obligations	Number of Contracts	Percentage Funding		Planned 2020 Funding	Planned 2020 %
Statewide EQIP	Farmstead	\$ 5,073,996	17	50%		\$ 4,685,000	44%
	Cropland	\$ 1,381,493	41	14%		\$ 2,085,000	20%
	Grazing	\$ 662,655	18	7%		\$ 500,000	5%
	Forestry & Wildlife	\$ 913,095	43	9%		\$ 1,000,000	9%
	Specialty Crop	\$ 78,987	3	1%		\$ 100,000	1%
	Conservation Activity Plans	\$ 277,627	126	3%			
	All Other CAPs	\$ 53,713	14	1%		\$ 350,000	3%
	Seasonal High Tunnel	\$ 270,836	23	3%		\$ 320,000	3%
	Beginning Farmer	\$ 373,386	19	4%		\$ 385,000	4%
	Socially Disadvantaged	\$ 85,925	3	1%		\$ 7,000	0%
National EQIP	National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)	\$ 443,006	2	4%			6%
	Hungerford Brook	\$ 102,500	1	1%		\$ 600,000	0%
	Certified Organic	\$ 24,089	3	0.2%		\$ 63,000	1%
	On-Farm Energy	\$ 33,718	1	0.3%		\$ 20,000	0.2%
Conservation Innovation Grants	Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)	\$ 402,810	3	4%		\$ 500,000	5%
Total EQIP Obligated 2020		\$ 10,177,836	317			\$ 10,615,000	100%

2020 EQIP Backlog - 154 applications @ \$5,667,258.67

Farmstead - 11 @ \$3,420,405

Beginning Farmer - 33 @ \$402,904.60

Forestry and Wildlife - 77 @ \$1,269,764.27

High Tunnel - 40 @ \$574,184.80

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2018 Farm Bill Regulations (Final Rule)

Program		IFR Publication Date		Final Rule Status	
CSP Final Rule		11/12/2019		Approved for publication	
EQIP Final Rule		12/17/2019		Pending OMB approval	
ACEP Final Rule		1/6/2020*		Awaiting Department clearance	
RCPP Final Rule		2/13/2020**		Awaiting Department clearance	
*ACEP IFR Correction 1/24/20					
**RCPP IFR Correction 3/17/20					

Getting Ready for 2021



August 24 – Subject Matter Experts (NRCS – CART)

September 1 – Field level input

October 6 – Working Lands subcommittee I

October 15 – ALE subcommittee

October 16 – WRE subcommittee

October 20 – Working Lands subcommittee II

October 21 – State Technical Committee

October 30 – Local Workgroups

All notes and minutes available upon request

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Working Lands Recommendations

Establish State Priority Resource Concerns as follows:

Water Quality:

- Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss
- Storage and handling of pollutants
- Pesticide loss

Soil:

- Wind and water erosion
- Concentrated erosion
- Soil quality limitations (soil health) – focus on organic matter

Habitat and Forestry:

- Terrestrial habitat
- Aquatic Habitat
- Degraded plant condition
- Concentrated erosion (trails and landings)

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Working Lands Recommendations

Establish EQIP State Priority Geographic Areas for FA resources as follows:

- 1) Do not establish any priority watersheds for FA resources**
- 2) Do prioritize applications within a 303(d) and TMDL watershed**
- 3) Utilize the State Technical Committee process as a “backstop” to reassess application levels and recommend funding movement later in the year**
- 4) Other: recognize the importance of TA activities in priority and strategic watersheds – TA support may be more beneficial than targeted FA support in these instances**

Working Lands Recommendations

Establish other EQIP State priorities as follows:

- 1) Prioritize applications that meet the definition of significant contributor**
- 2) Prioritize applications where the application will bring them into/maintain compliance w/State Environmental laws**



Working Lands Recommendations

Offer Ranking Pools and State Spending Plan as Follows:

CSP

2021 CART Ranking Pools and State Spending Plan v1.0 effective 10/19/2021							
Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	ProTracts Sign-up	Request for Assistance/Application Date	Assessment + Ranking Deadline	Obligation Deadline	Proposed Allocation (based on 2021 SRA Request)
CSP-GCI	Not evaluated in CART		CSP-GCI-2021-1	10/16/2020	Not Evaluated	12/31/2020	Determined by NHQ
			CSP-GCI-2021-2	TBD	TBD	TBD	Determined by NHQ
CSP - Renewals (All types)	AgLand - Renewal	Statewide	CSP-1 Renewal	3/20/2020	12/4/2020	2/28/2021	Determined by NHQ
	AgLand SD - Renewal	Statewide					
	AgLand BF - Renewal	Statewide					
	AgLand Organic - Renewal	Statewide					
	NIPF - Renewal	Statewide					
	NIPF SD - Renewal	Statewide					
	NIPF BF - Renewal	Statewide					
CSP-Classic	AgLand - Classic	Statewide	CSP-1	TBD	TBD	TBD	Determined by NHQ
	AgLand SD - Classic	Statewide					
	AgLand BF - Classic	Statewide					
	AgLand Organic - Classic	Statewide					
	NIPF - Classic	Statewide					
	NIPF SD - Classic	Statewide					
	NIPF BF - Classic	Statewide					

Working Lands Recommendations

Offer Ranking Pools and State Spending Plan as Follows based on the 2021 State Resource Assessment (SRA)

AMA (assume \$400,000)/EQIP (\$13,100,000)

2021 CART Ranking Pools and State Spending Plan v1.0 effective 10/19/2021																							
Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	ProTracts Sign-up		Request for Assistance/Application Date		Assessment + Ranking Deadline		Obligation Deadline		Proposed Allocation (based on 2021 SRA Request)												
AMA	2021_VT_AMA_General	Irrigation	1	2	Sign-up 1 11/20/2020	Sign-up 2 3/19/2021	Assessment 1 2/5/2021	Assessment 2 4/23/2021	Obligation 1 5/6/2021	Obligation 2 7/22/2021	\$400,000	\$250,000											
		Seasonal High Tunnel										\$150,000											
EQIP - Classic	2021_VT_EQIP_General	Farmstead	1	Not Offered	Sign-up 1 11/20/2020	Not Offered	Assessment 1 2/5/2021	Not Offered	Obligation 1 5/6/2021	Obligation 2 7/22/2021	\$9,350,000	\$5,900,000											
		Cropland		2		Sign-up 2 3/19/2021		Assessment 2 4/23/2021				\$750,000	\$2,600,000										
		Grazing											\$850,000										
	2021_VT_NWQI	Rock River									\$600,000												
		East Creek																					
		Hungerford Brook																					
	2021_VT_Forestry_Wildlife	Source Water (Vernon/Passumpsic)									\$1,100,000												
		Statewide																					
	2021_VT_Conservation_Activity_Plans	Forestry CAPs									\$350,000												
		All Other CAPs																					
	2021_VT_Specialty_Crop_and_High_Tunnel	Specialty Crop									\$75,000												
		Seasonal High Tunnel																					
	2021_VT_Beginning_Farmer	Statewide									\$190,000												
	2021_VT_Socially_Disadvantaged	Statewide									\$350,000												
	FY21 Organic Certified	Statewide									\$75,000												
	FY21 Organic Transition	Statewide									\$95,000												
	FY21 On-Farm Energy	Statewide									\$15,000												
	EQIP - Incentives	2021_VT_EQIP_Incentives									Statewide		TBD		TBD		TBD		TBD		\$200,000		
	CIG	Conservation Innovation Grants									2021 Conservation Innovation Grants		Managed in EzFedGrants									\$500,000	

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Additional discussion

- **Several requests for Methane Digesters via EQIP**
 - **Set aside special funding or compete against general EQIP?**



Working Lands Recommendations

Offer a 90% enhanced payment rate (Top-10) Statewide through EQIP on the following practices:

393 - Filter strip

340 – Cover Crop - all scenarios

345 – Residue & Tillage Management – Reduced tillage

391 – Riparian Forest Buffer

512 – Pasture & Hay Planting (seeding down continuous corn)

808 - Soil Carbon Amendment

585 – Stripcropping

590 - Nutrient Management – all scenarios

612 – Tree / Shrub Establishment

216 – Soil Health Test

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EQIP Incentives Contracts



- In 2021 NRCS will be offering a new EQIP-Incentives contract programs
- The 2018 Farm Bill introduced EQIP incentive contracts to expand resource benefits for producers through incentive conservation practices such as cover crops, transition to resource conserving crop rotations, and precision agriculture technologies along with a similarly broad suite of incentive practices for ranchers and nonindustrial private forest operators.
- EQIP incentive contracts can be a steppingstone for producers between EQIP classic and Conservation Stewardship Program contracts.

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EQIP Incentives Contracts



Input will be needed as follows:

- **Identify High-Priority Areas**
- **Identify Priority Resource Concerns**
- **Identify Incentive Practices**

For now: Set aside \$200,000 from EQIP

Stay Tuned!



What to know now



- **Taking a cautious rollout in 2021 – too many glitches in 2020**
- **All Financial Assistance Programs are accepting request for assistance (i.e – applications - CSP + EQIP + AMA)**
- **Deadlines is set at 11/20/2020 for application period 1 CSP dates are generally published by NHQ and are not available**
- **RCPP dates are TBD and being negotiated individually with each lead partner**



RCPP – 2014FB and 2018FB



Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	ProTracts Sign-up		Request for Assistance/Application Date		Assessment + Ranking Deadline		Obligation Deadline		Proposed Allocation (based on 2021 SRA Request)			
RCPP - 2014 Farm Bill	EQIP - Long Island Sound (0484)	Soil health	1	Not Offered	Sign-up 1 11/20/2020	Not Offered	Assessment 1/15/2021	Not Offered	Obligation 4/30/2021	Not Offered	\$289,000			
		Resiliency									\$240,000			
	EQIP - VACD Nutrient Management Plans (1696)	Project Area	1	2	Sign-up 1 11/20/2020	Sign-up 2 3/19/2021	Assessment 1 2/5/2021	Assessment 2 4/23/2021	Obligation 1 5/6/2021	Obligation 2 7/22/2021	\$233,000			
	EQIP - Cold Hollow Woodlots (1548)	Project Area									\$229,000			
	EQIP - Lake Memphremagog (1437)	Project Area									\$67,000			
	EQIP - Connecting the Connecticut (1710)	Project Area									\$250,000			
RCPP - 2018 Farm Bill		Farmstead	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD			\$2,725,000		
	Land Management & Land Rentals - Accelerated...Lake Champlain	Forestry Erosion									\$3,675,000	\$450,000		
		Restoration										\$500,000		
	Land Management - Northern Tier Stream Restoration	Project Area										\$420,000		
RCPP Easements - (2014 and 2018 Farm Bill)	HFRP - Long Island Sound	Project Area	NA		TBD		TBD		4/30/2021		TBD			
	US Held Easements - Accelerated...Lake Champlain	Project Area - Wetland			TBD		TBD		8/27/2021		\$1,000,000	\$750,000		
		Project Area - Riparian												
	Entity Held Easements - Accelerated...Lake Champlain	Project Area - Working Lands			TBD		TBD						\$2,250,000	
	US Held Easements (TBD) - Northern Tier Stream Restoration	Project Area - Working Lands			TBD		TBD						\$50,000	



Easement Programs

12:30 – 1:15pm



2020 was a bumpy year

- \$18.5 million in total financial assistance obligations
- \$10.2 million in EQIP
- \$2.1 million RCPP-EQIP
- \$647,000 in CSP
- \$5.2 million in easements



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2020 Summary



Summary of 2020 NRCS Financial Assistance Programs - October 1, 2020 - FINAL

CART Ranking Pool	CART Category	Obligations	Number of Contracts	Percentage Funding
Statewide EQIP	Forestland	\$ 5,073,996	17	50%
	Cropland	\$ 1,581,493	41	14%
	Grassland	\$ 661,055	18	7%
	Forestry & Wildlife	\$ 813,093	43	3%
	Specialty Crop	\$ 76,987	3	1%
	Conservation Activity Place	\$ 277,627	124	3%
	All Other CAPs	\$ 55,713	14	1%
	Seasonal High Tunnel	\$ 270,834	23	3%
National EQIP	Beginning Farmer	\$ 273,584	10	4%
	Socially Disadvantaged	\$ 85,835	3	1%
	National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)	\$ 443,066	2	4%
	Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)	\$ 102,500	1	1%
	Certified Organic	\$ 24,889	3	0.2%
	On-Farm Energy	\$ 33,718	1	0.3%
Conservation Innovation Grants		\$ 402,810	3	4%
Total EQIP Obligated 2020		\$ 10,177,836	317	
Total EQIP Received		\$ 10,615,000.00		
Obligation Rate		96%		

CART Ranking Pool	CART Category	Annual Obligations	Annual Contracts	Total Project Obligations
RCPP-EQIP 2014 Farm Bill	2015 - VT DEC - Lake Champlain	\$ 1,871,046	25	\$ 6,200,543
	Forestland Erosion Pool	\$ 190,000	10	
	Soil Health	\$ -	0	\$ 475,400
	2015 - Long Island Sound	\$ 36,317	2	
	2015 - CONWIC - Lake Management	\$ 36,410	3	\$ 47,965
	2015 - Gold River Wetlands	\$ 26,910	1	\$ 219,943
	2015 - VACU - Nutrient Management II	\$ -	0	\$ 213,334
	2015 - TNC - Connecting the Connecticut	\$ -	0	\$ 250,000
Total RCPP Obligated 2020		\$ 2,131,980	41	

CART Ranking Pool	CART Category	Obligations	Number of Contracts
Statewide AMA	Cropland	\$ 353,104.00	30
Total AMA Obligated		\$ 353,104.00	30
Total AMA Received		\$ 382,000.00	
Obligation Rate		92%	

CART Ranking Pool	CART Category	Obligations	Number of Contracts
Statewide CSP	CSP - Grassland Conservation Initiative	\$ -	0
	CSP - Wetlands	\$ 34,375.00	1
	CSP - Aquatic	\$ 484,000.00	18
	CSP - Forestry	\$ 187,702.00	11
Total CSP Obligated		\$ 647,357.00	37
Total CSP Received		\$ 770,000.00	
Obligation Rate		84%	

Summary of 2020 NRCS Easement Programs - September 17, 2020

CART Ranking Pool	CART Category	Obligations	Number of Parcels	Acres Enrolled
Statewide ACEP-ALE	ACEP-ALE	\$ 2,243,500.00	18	2,390
	ACEP-WRE (all costs)	\$ 1,445,838.00	2	432
RCPP-ACEP 2014 Farm Bill	2012 - VT DEC Lake Champlain - ALE	\$ 434,500.00	2	530
RCPP-WREP 2014 Farm Bill	2012 - VT DEC Lake Champlain - WRE	\$ -	0	0
	2012 - Long Island Sound - WREP (all costs)	\$ 204,238.00	2	388
Total Easement Funds Obligated		\$ 5,228,116.00	24	3,720
Total of all funds obligated in Fiscal Year 2020		\$ 18,538,393.00		

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

10/1/2020 09:58

2018 Farm Bill Regulations (Final Rule)

Program		IFR Publication Date		Final Rule Status	
CSP Final Rule		11/12/2019		Approved for publication	
EQIP Final Rule		12/17/2019		Pending OMB approval	
ACEP Final Rule		1/6/2020*		Awaiting Department clearance	
RCPP Final Rule		2/13/2020**		Awaiting Department clearance	
*ACEP IFR Correction 1/24/20					
**RCPP IFR Correction 3/17/20					

Getting Ready for 2021



August 24 – Subject Matter Experts (NRCS – CART)

September 1 – Field level input

October 6 – Working Lands subcommittee I

October 15 – ALE subcommittee

October 16 – WRE subcommittee

October 20 – Working Lands subcommittee II

October 21 – State Technical Committee

October 30 – Local Workgroups

All notes and minutes available upon request

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ALE Recommendations

- In general, ranking criteria worked well (CART year 1)
- **Suggest ranking changes as follows:**
 - Review the point weights for “exclusions” from the proposed project
- **Sign-ups: For programmatic agreements allow continuous sign-up through June 19 (tentative)**
 - This allows for AGI to be validated by IRS and for NRCS to make site visits
- **Establish a minimum CART ranking score of 70 to allow for a rolling enrollment period (CPM 528.40)**
- **Sign-ups: For new programmatic or cooperative agreements April 17**

ALE Recommendations

2021 CART Ranking Pools and State Spending Plan v1.0 effective 10/19/2021

Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	ProTracts Sign-up	Request for Assistance/Application Date	Assessment + Ranking Deadline	Obligation Deadline	Proposed Allocation (based on 2021 SRA Request)	
ACEP	ACEP-WRE-General	Statewide	NA	2/5/2020	4/2/2020	8/27/2021	\$1,518,300	
	ACEP-ALE-General	Statewide - Program Agreements		Threshold Ranking through 6/19/2021			\$3,523,000	
		Statewide - Cooperative Agreements		4/17/2020	6/19/2021			
RCPP Easements - (2014 and 2018 Farm Bill)	HFRP - Long Island Sound	Project Area	NA	TBD	TBD	4/30/2021	TBD	
	US Held Easements - Accelerated...Lake Champlain	Project Area - Wetland		TBD	TBD	8/27/2021	\$1,000,000	\$750,000
		Project Area - Riparian						\$250,000
	Entity Held Easements - Accelerated...Lake Champlain	Project Area - Working Lands		TBD	TBD		\$2,250,000	
	US Held Easements (TBD) - Northern Tier Stream Restoration	Project Area - Working Lands		TBD	TBD		\$50,000	

ALE Recommendations

- **Impervious surface limitations – currently max is set at 7%**
 - Changes? Increase? Decrease?
- **No change to the current soils waiver criteria**
 - 50% LCB and CT River
 - 35% all other



WRE Recommendations

- **Maintain the WRE ranking pool :**
 - **Geospatial capabilities of CART aren't for targeting, only scoring an actual application**
 - **Selecting too many “layers” may seem look a nice goal, however outreach is being done in these priority areas already and drives the applications**
 - **The targeting layers generally end up pointing at the same areas, duplicative to “stack” geospatial layers**
 - **Dependence on layers may cause us to miss interesting areas that are not known in broader targeted areas**
 - **Bogs**

WRE Recommendations

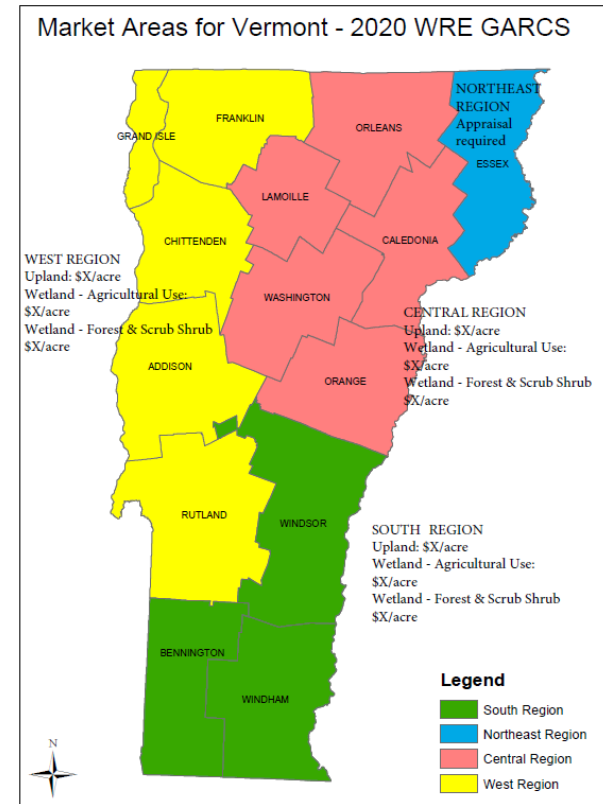
- For the future:
- Look at soils for targeting
- Do a data analysis of existing WRE projects and what soils they are located on
- initiate a GIS exercise to locate those soil types
- Perform field visits to see if has wetland potential



WRE Recommendations

2021 Valuation methodology

- Update the AWMA for Geographic Area Rate Caps (in progress)
- If approved within 10% - use the revised GARC's and State geographic areas
- Establish a Blanket Purchase Agreement for appraisals if possible (underway)
- Notify the committee of the AWMA results for approval



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WRE Recommendations

WRCG – Wetland Restoration Criteria Guideline

Under development – goal to sign off by December

- **Requires State Tech. Review and approval**



Other



- **WREP application has been announced – Due 11/30/2020 to Obediah Racicot**
- **EWP-Flood Plain Easements will be announced**
- **RCPP 2020/21 application period has been extended to 11/30/2020**





THE END



United States Department of Agriculture

October State Technical Committee Meeting



Vermont NRCS
Joe D. Buford
State Resource Conservationist



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Topics



- **Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)**
- **Practice Payment Schedule**
- **High Priority Practices (HPP)**
- **Source Water Protection Area Practices (SWPA)**
- **New Conservation Practices/Conservation Stewardship Program Enhancements/Conservation Stewardship Program Bundles**
- **FY 20/21 Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG)**
- **National Water Quality Initiative Watershed Selection (NWQI)**



Practice Payment Schedule



NB 300-20-11 LTP - Guidance for Designation of High Priority Practices and Source Water Protection Practices

National Bulletin: 300-20-11

Date: February 7, 2020

Subject: LTP - Guidance for Designation of High Priority Practices and Source Water Protection Practices

Purpose. To provide fiscal year (FY) 2020 guidance to State Conservationists and Area Directors (Caribbean and Pacific Islands) regarding the selection of high priority practices for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and update previous guidance regarding source water protection practices.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2020

Background. The 2018 Farm Bill and the EQIP interim rule (published December 17, 2019) authorize increased payments for up to 10 high priority practices and source water protection practices.

On May 6, 2019, NRCS issued National Bulletin (NB) 300-19-25 LTP, "Preparing for Source Water Protection Activities in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019" to provide initial guidance on compliance with the source water protection language in the 2018 Farm Bill and listed actions that needed to occur in FY 2019. That included working with drinking water partners to identify local priority areas for source water protection and identifying practices that address water quality and quantity threats to source water for increased incentive rates. State Conservationists and Area Directors were required to provide their local priority areas and associated SWPA plans and assessments by September 30, 2019.

Explanation.

EQIP High Priority Practices

State Conservationists and Area Directors, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, have the option to select up to 10 high priority practices, which may receive increased payment rates. A high priority practice must meet one of the following criteria:

- Addresses specific causes of impairment relating to excessive nutrients in ground or surface water;
- Addresses the conservation of water, to advance drought mitigation and declining aquifers;
- Meets other environmental priorities and other priority resource concerns identified in habitat or other area restoration plans; or
- Is geographically targeted to address a natural resource concern in a specific watershed.

In addition, States can use, but are not limited to, the following guidance for selection of their high priority practices:



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Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)

What is the Field Office Technical Guide?

Technical guides are the primary scientific references for NRCS. They contain technical information about the conservation of soil, water, air, and related plant and animal resources.

Technical guides used in each field office are localized so that they apply specifically to the geographic area for which they are prepared. These documents are referred to as Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs).

What's New in FOTG?

The Ecological Sciences Division launched its fifth revised FOTG on September 19. Field offices, the guide's primary users, will find the guide's new design improves the user experience and encourages consistency in its five sections. The guide continues to allow states to add relevant information, but it is also organized to ensure its structure is consistent for all states.

Here are several major changes to FOTG:

- Instead of navigating to the FOTG by clicking on maps of states and counties, users choose a state in an alphabetical list of state names and click "submit" to reach their local FOTG. A document tree on the left side of the screen lists the five sections' contents. Document collections and search results are displayed clearly in the center of the screen.
- Section IV has undergone the most significant changes to encourage consistency in document organization.
 - For an interim period, Section IV will contain two collections called "Conservation Practices and Support





FIELD OFFICE TECHNICAL GUIDE

Welcome to NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)

Select a state for documents.

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About FOTG

Technical guides are the primary scientific references for NRCS. They contain technical information about the conservation of soil, water, air, and related plant and animal resources.

Technical guides used in each field office are localized so that they apply specifically to the geographic area for which they are prepared. These documents are referred to as Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs).

Appropriate parts of the Field Office Technical Guides are automated as databases, computer programs, and other electronic-based materials such as those included in these web based pages.

FOTG Sections

Section I - General References

- General state maps.
- Descriptions of Major Land Resource Areas, watershed information, and links to NRCS reference manuals and handbooks.
- Links to researchers, universities, and agencies we work with.
- Conservation practice costs and agricultural laws and regulations.

Section II - Natural Resources Information

- Detailed information about soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources.
- Cultural resources and information about protected plant and animal species.
- NRCS Soil Surveys, Hydric Soils Interpretations, Ecological Site Descriptions, Forage Suitability Groups, Cropland Production Tables, Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides, Water Quality Guides, and other related information can be found here as it becomes available.

Section III -

- NRCS Qu that help

Section IV -

- NRCS Co where it a installing

Section V-C

- Backgrou identified



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Select a state for documents.

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Document Tree

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Section I ▼

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Section V ▼

Documents (0)

Document Title	Type	Pub Date	Subject	Keywords	Abstract	Size (kB)	Actions
No documents to show.							





Document Tree

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Section I

Erosion Prediction

FOTG Transmittals

Laws

Manuals and Handbooks

Maps

State Payment Rates and Methods

Technical References

Water Quality Monitoring Activities

Section II

Section III

Section IV

Section V

State Payment Rates and Methods

Documents (1)

Document Title	Type	Pub Date	Subject	Keywords	Abstract
State Payment Rates and Methods Website		2017-9-29	--	Program Costs; Program Payment Rates;	--

2020 EQIP High Priority Practices – “Top 10” Selected

332 – Contour Buffer Strips

340 – Cover Crop (multi-species only)

345 – Residue & Tillage Management – Reduced tillage

391 – Riparian Forest Buffer

512 – Pasture & Hay Planting (seeding down continuous corn)

582 – Open Channel

585 – Stripcropping

590 - Nutrient Management (manure injection only)

612 – Tree / Shrub Establishment

782 – Phosphorus Removal System

2020 EQIP Source Water Protection – Passumpsic & Vernon Dam “Top 10” Selected

309 – Agrichemical Handling Facility

328 – Conservation Crop Rotation

340 – Cover Crop

351 – Well Decommissioning

355 – Groundwater Testing

391 – Riparian Forest Buffer

393 – Filter Strip

561 – Heavy Use Area Protection

590 – Nutrient Management

595 – Pest Management Conservation System



New Practices & Scenarios



Cap 116- Soil Health Management

216 – Soil Testing

368 – Emergency Animal Mortality Management (COVID new Scenario)

330 – Contour Farming

334 – Controlled Traffic Farming

604 – Saturated Buffer

645 – Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (grassland bird new Scenario)

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New Enhancement & Bundles

E328L	Leaving tall crop residue for wildlife
E328M	Diversify crop rotation with canola or sunflower to benefit pollinators
E373A	Dust suppressant re-application for stabilization (NOT ADOPTED IN VT)
E412A	Enhance a grassed waterway
E420A	Establish pollinator habitat
E420B	Establish monarch butterfly habitat
E449H	Intermediate IWM— Years 2 -5, using soil moisture or water level monitoring
E449I	IWM - Year 1, Retrofit Equipment with Speed Control on Sprinkler Irrigation System
E511C	Forage testing for improved harvesting methods and hay quality
E666S	Facilitating longleaf pine regeneration and establishment (NOT OFFERED IN VT)
B000CPL23	Crop Bundle #23 – Pheasant and quail habitat
B000CPL24	Crop Bundle #24 – Cropland Soil Health Management System

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New Conservation Activity Plan Practice

CAP 116 – Soil Health Management

- 4 Principles of Soil Health
 - Steps 1-6
- Inventory and Assessment
 - In-Field Cropland SH Assessment
 - PCS or RHA or other appropriate tool

Scenario	Description	\$ (no.)
Small Farm	<10 acres	2,427
Crops	Evaluate soil health concerns and develop a transitional cropping management plan to improve overall soil health and address all 4 soil health principles	3,236
Organic Crops		3,640
Crops + Livestock		4,045
Organic Crops + Livestock		4,450

* National payment rates

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New Conservation Practice

216 – Soil Testing Activity

Purpose: Design the installation of planned soil health practices based on results from a soil health test.

- “Basic Suite”: All 5 recommended indicators
 - Agg. Stab., Active C, SOC, Bioavailable N & Respiration
- “Comprehensive Chemical”: Macro, 2nd, Micro’s
- “Single Indicator”: States Choice from TN 450-03
 - VA use 3-day respiration for N management



New Practice Cont.

216 – Soil Testing Activity

Scenario	Procedure	Requirements	\$ (no.)
1 Indicator: TSP	TSP Collects Soil and Develops IR's for SH Practices	A completed or planned CAP 116	81
Basic Suite: TSP			234
Basic + Comp. Chem: TSP			324
1 Indicator: TSP Sample	TSP collects soil and reviews results and delivers to NRCS. NRCS develops IR's	A completed 116 or a NRCS conservation plan with SH practices	51
Basic Suite: TSP Sample			153
Basic + Comp. Chem: TSP Sample			203
1 Indicator: Cons. Plan	Another entity collects soil – no labor costs. NRCS develops IR's	A completed 116 or a NRCS conservation plan with SH practices	23
Basic Suite: Cons. Plan			116
Basic + Comp. Chem: Cons. Plan			165

* National payment rates

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New Interim Conservation Practice

808 – Soil Carbon Amendment

Apply compost, biochar or other organic C

Scenario	Description	\$ (ac)
Compost – Low Rate - Imported	> 1 ton/ac compost to improve organism habitat	98
Compost – Low Rate – On Farm	> 1 ton/ac compost to improve organism habitat	75
Compost – Moderate Rate - Imported	> 3 ton/ac compost to improve SOM etc.	242
Compost – Moderate Rate – On Farm	> 3 ton/ac compost to improve SOM etc.	170
Biochar - Imported	> 1 ton/ac or 4 cu yd/ac to improve SH RC's	845
Compost + Biochar – Imported	At least 10% Biochar applied > 3 ton/ac or 6 cu yd/ac of total compost + biochar mix	330
Carbon By-Product	Shipping and spreading only. Assumes free byproduct such as bagasse, coal ash, wood ash etc.	216
Whole Orchard Recycling	On site grinding or chipping of whole trees during orchard removal and incorporation of the chips	326

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Service



FY 2021 High Priority Recommended Top 10 Practices

- In the FY 20 HPP, 340-cover crop was limited only to Multi Species, and for FY 21 the recommendation is to include all scenarios.
- In the FY 20 HPP, 590-nutrient mgmt. was limited only to Manure Injection, and for FY 21 the recommendation is the same.
- In the FY 20 HPP, 512-forage and biomass planting was limited only to the seed down of continuous corn fields. The recommendation is the same for FY 21. Note: The name has changed to Pasture and Hayland Planting.
- Any changes to the HPP list for FY 21 are needed by COB Monday October 5th to transmit thru the Payment Support Tool. Note: This deadline is not a VT deadline, but a NHQ deadline.

FY 2021 High Priority Top 10 Practices

- 1) 216- Soil Testing
- 2) 612- Tree Shrub and Establishment
- 3) 808- Soil Carbon Amendment
- 4) 393- Filter Strip
- 5) 340- Cover Crop (all scenarios)
- 6) 345- Residue and Tillage Mgmt., Residue Management
- 7) 391- Riparian Forest Buffer
- 8) 512- Pasture and Hayland Planting
- 9) 585- Stripcropping
- 10) 590- Nutrient Management (all scenarios)



FY 2021 Source Water Protection Area Top 10 Practices

309 – Agrichemical Handling Facility

328 – Conservation Crop Rotation

340 – Cover Crop

351 – Well Decommissioning

355 – Groundwater Testing

391 – Riparian Forest Buffer

393 – Filter Strip

561 – Heavy Use Area Protection

590 – Nutrient Management

595 – Pest Management Conservation System



National Handbook of Conservation Practices Notice 170 & 171

National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP) Notices 170 & 171 were recently posted, announcing changes to several national conservation practice standards. The notices are attached and can also be found here:

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=22299>

National practice standards are available online here:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/technical/cp/ncps/?cid=nrcs143_026849

Federal Notice

Federal Register Notice

NRCS published a notice to solicit public comments about how to improve specific agency conservation practice standards in the *Federal Register* on October 23, 2019 and March 24, 2020 for a 30-day comment periods. Comments from the public were accepted during the comment period



NHCP 170



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

NATIONAL HANDBOOK OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES

450 – NHCP

August 19, 2020

NOTICE 170

Purpose. This notice transmits new, revised, and to be archived national Conservation Practice Standards (CPSs), along with an updated index for insertion into the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP). Notes are included to highlight key changes made to each CPS. States have until September 30, 2022, to adopt these changes into the state editions of these standards. Extra time is provided given the number of changes as a result of the 2018 Farm Bill. States are instructed to focus on updating those standards that are used most frequently in their States prior to those used less frequently.



NHCP 171



United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

NATIONAL HANDBOOK OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES

450 – NHCP

NOTICE 171

September 30, 2020

Purpose. This notice transmits revised national Conservation Practice Standards (CPSs), along with an updated index for insertion into the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP). Notes are included to highlight key changes made to each CPS. States have until October 1, 2022, to adopt these changes into the state editions of these standards except for Pest Management Conservation System (Code 595) which must be updated by October 1, 2021. The update of Pest Management Conservation System (Code 595) is a pen and ink change. Extra time is provided given the number of changes as a result of the 2018 Farm Bill. States are instructed to focus on updating those standards that are used most frequently in their States prior to those used less frequently.

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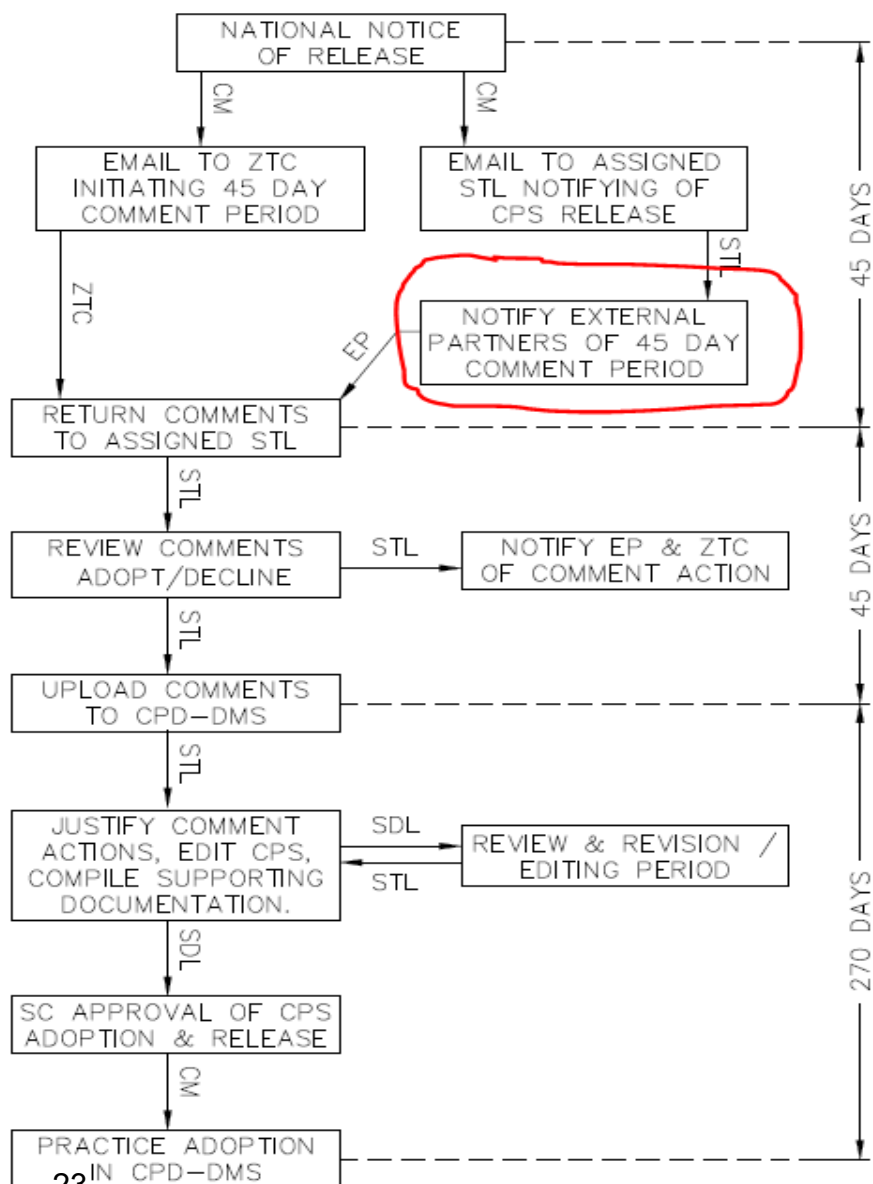
Effective Date. This notice is effective October 1, 2020.



CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD SUBMITTAL WORKFLOW

ROLES

CM	FOTG CONTENT MANAGER
SDL	STATE DISCIPLINE LEAD
STL	STATE TECHNICAL LEAD
ZTC	ZONE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
EP	EXTERNAL PARTNERS
SC	STATE CONSERVATIONIST



Date _____

Designed _____

Drawn _____

Checked _____

Approved by _____

United States Department of Agriculture

USDA

Natural Resources Conservation Service

HAZARD CLASS _____

JOB CLASS _____

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD (CPS) SUBMITTAL WORKFLOW

VERMONT

File Name _____

Drawing Name _____

Sheet 1 of 1

How best to get you the information to review?

Comments on these practices can be sent to the following individuals by **November 27, 2020** :

Codes 317, 318, 320, 348, 351, 353, 355, 388, 397, 400, 402, 410, 412, 428, 430, 436, 441, 447, 449, 450, 460, 464, 468, 500, 516, 533, 554, 555, 560, 561, 570, 572, 574, 575, 576, 580, 600, 605, 607, 614, 620, 629, 636, 640, 642, 670, 672 – Kayla Nickles (kayla.nickles@usda.gov)

Codes 511, 512, 557, 591, 595, 610 – Sandra Primard (sandra.primard@usda.gov)

Codes 315, 338, 391, 490 – Toby Alexander (toby.alexander@usda.gov)



Vermont FY 2020 Conservation Innovation Grant Notice

Summary Information

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Department Of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)

Funding Opportunity Title: Announcement for Program Funding for NRCS' Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2020 – Vermont

Initial Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIG-001 (will be revised)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 10.912, Environmental Quality Incentives Program

NRCS is announcing the availability of CIG to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Applications are accepted from [eligible entities](#) for projects carried out in the state of Vermont. A total of up to \$500,000.00 is available for the Vermont CIG competition in FY 2020. Non-federal entities (NFE) and individuals are invited to apply, with the sole exception of federal agencies. Projects may be between one and three years in duration. The minimum award amount for a single award is \$10,000; the maximum award amount for a single award in FY 2020 is \$250,000.

APPLICATIONS DUE DATE: Applications must be received by 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on June 5th, 2020.

SUBMISSIONS: Applications must be submitted electronically through [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). In addition, a PDF of the complete application must be emailed to joe.buford@usda.gov and sandra.primard@usda.gov. Submissions must be received by the time and date due. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation for submission made both via Grants.gov and e-mail to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. [Click here for more on how to submit an application](#)

FY 2020 Conservation Innovation Grants

- **Awarded 3 projects in FY 20 for about 402K.**
- **Compared to FY 2019 this was about an 212K increase.**
- **Thanks for all the outreach on this opportunity by the partners.**
- **Working with Justin Tuthill (ASTC for M&S) and Team to host a CIG overview training prior to the deadline of the FY 21 proposed deadline.**



On Farm Conservation Innovation Trials/Classic CIG

Out of 24 million VT took home 4 million. 1/6th of the pie



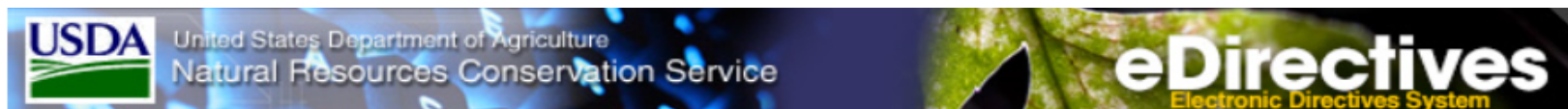
FY 2021 Conservation Innovation Grant

- Have a water quality priority announcement at up to 250k?
- Have a grazing/forestry/and wildlife announcement at up to 250k?
- Have a state version of a OFCIT at up to 250k
- The amounts may vary based on the 5% of our allocated dollars in FY21.
- Tentative deadline date of February 1, 2021
- We have been given no responses to the following:
 - Have a state version of a OFCIT at up to 250k
 - Have two or three separate CIIG announcements for priority resource concerns

Request for Technical Reviewers

If you are interested in serving as a technical reviewer for the VT CIG applications in FY 21 please send your name to Joe.Buford@usda.gov and cc Sandra.Primard@usda.gov by December 1st, 2020.





NB 300-20-21 LTP - National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Watershed and Source Water Protection Area Selection and Criteria for Planning and Implementation Phases of NWQI – Fiscal Year (FY) 2021

National Bulletin: 300-20-21

Date: April 8, 2020

Subject: LTP – National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Watershed and Source Water Protection Area Selection and Criteria for Planning and Implementation Phases of NWQI – Fiscal Year (FY) 2021

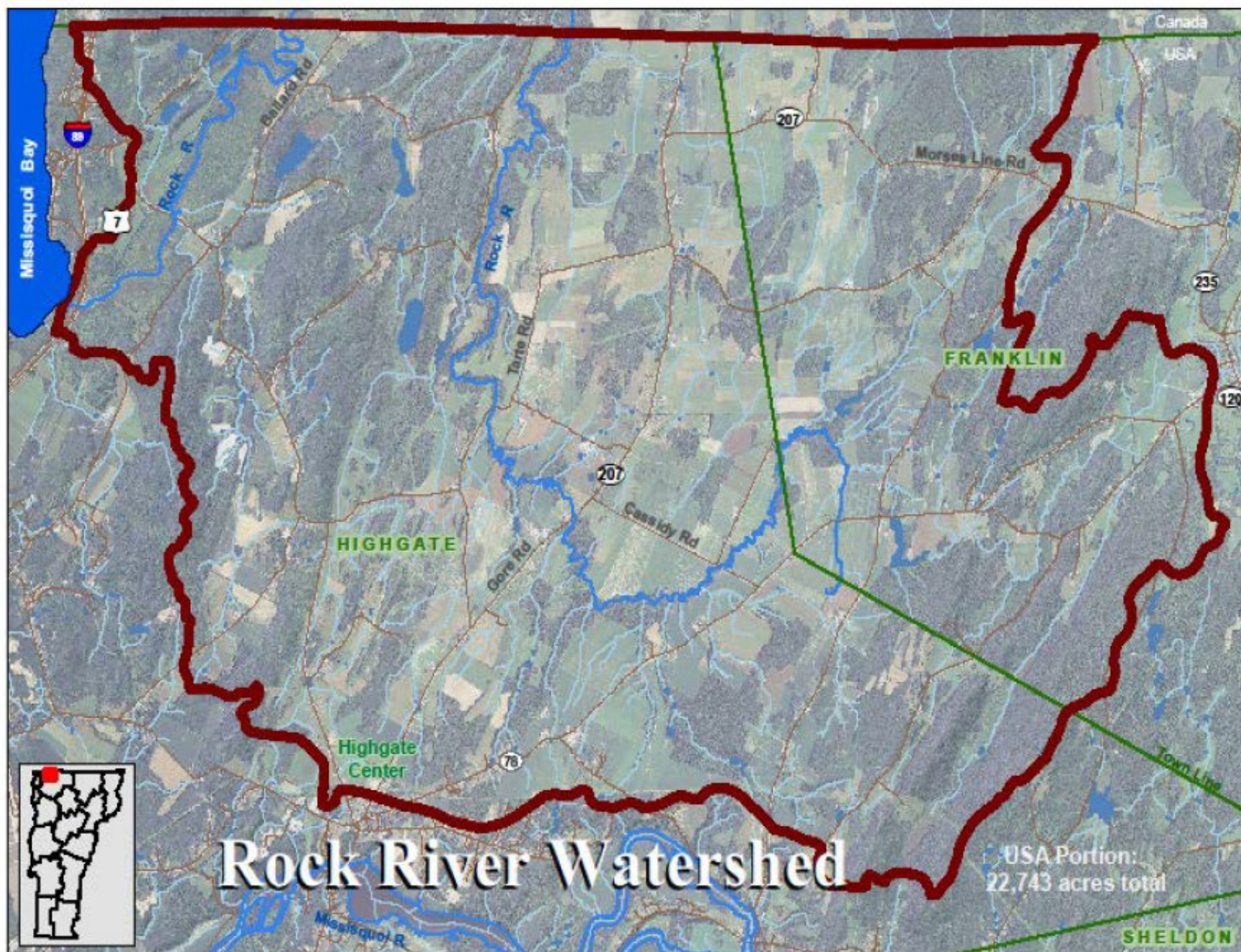
Action Required By: July 3, 2020

Purpose. To provide State conservationists (STCs) and directors of the Caribbean and Pacific Island Areas with requirements for NWQI participation, information about NWQI funding allocations, guidance and criteria for selecting new NWQI watersheds, submitting justification to withdraw existing NWQI watersheds, and proposing new source water protection areas (SWPAs) for FY 2021.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2020

Background. NWQI was established in FY 2012 as an initiative delivered jointly with State water quality agencies and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to address agricultural sources of water pollution, specifically nutrients, sediment, and pathogens in priority watersheds throughout the country. In FY 2017, NWQI piloted a “readiness” phase where States could include watersheds in NWQI and receive technical assistance for conservation planning, outreach, and coordination with partners prior to receiving financial assistance. This is now the “planning” phase. In FY 2019, NWQI was expanded to include source water protection for ground and surface waters. Each year, STCs consult with State water quality agencies and partners to evaluate the status of NWQI watersheds and SWPAs and propose to add or withdraw them based on NWQI criteria, State priorities, and NRCS leadership approval. **All States are required to participate in NWQI with a minimum of three watersheds (HUC12) to address impaired or threatened surface waters.**

Figure 1 – Map of the Rock River Watershed





Resource Assessment and Watershed Plan for Agriculture in the Rock River Watershed, Franklin County, Vermont (May 2016)



QUESTIONS?



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/



Coordination of Beginning Farmer Assistance

Vermont USDA State Technical Committee Meeting
October 21, 2020



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Background



The 2018 Farm Bill established the creation of a Beginning Farmer and Rancher (BFR) Coordinator in each state.

BFR State Coordinators support USDA's efforts to increase beginning farmer outreach, access and success across USDA programs:

- BFR Support and Outreach
- Technical Support
- Planning and Reporting
- Stakeholder Support and Engagement

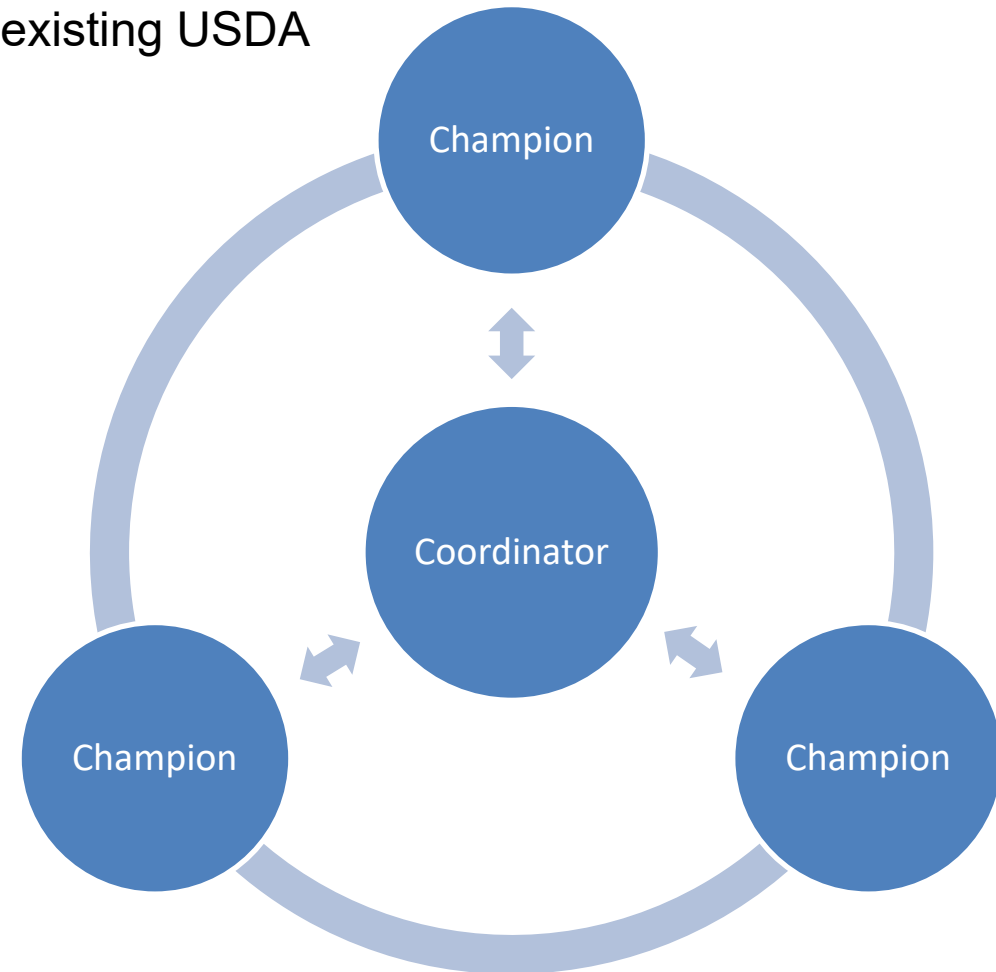
Structure

State Coordinator role was established as a collateral duty for existing USDA employees, and were drawn from four USDA agencies:

- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Rural Development
- Risk Management Agency

State Coordinators are supported by “Champions” representing the balance of the four agencies ensuring that each State BFR “Team” has representation/expertise from each agency.

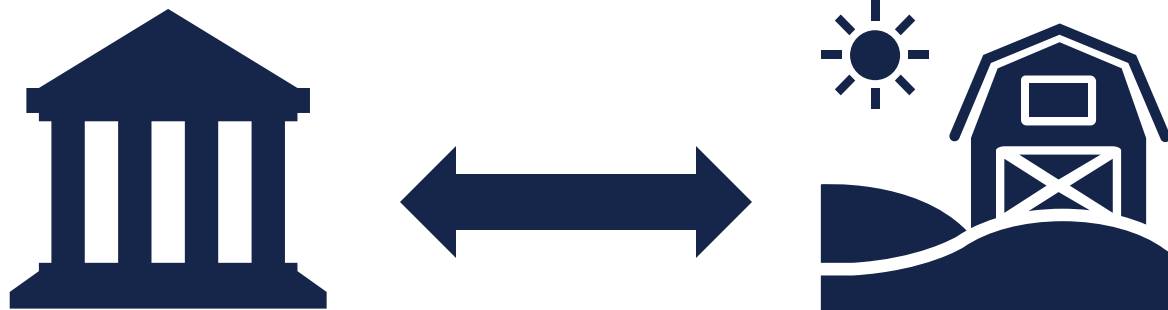
BFR Team is currently developing BFR State Plan for FY 2021.



Technical Support and Outreach

Serve as a resource, advocate, and guide to BFRs in the State. Provide hands on support in navigating USDA resources and referrals.

Increase awareness of USDA programs for beginning farmers, support beginning farmers success through targeted outreach and engagement.



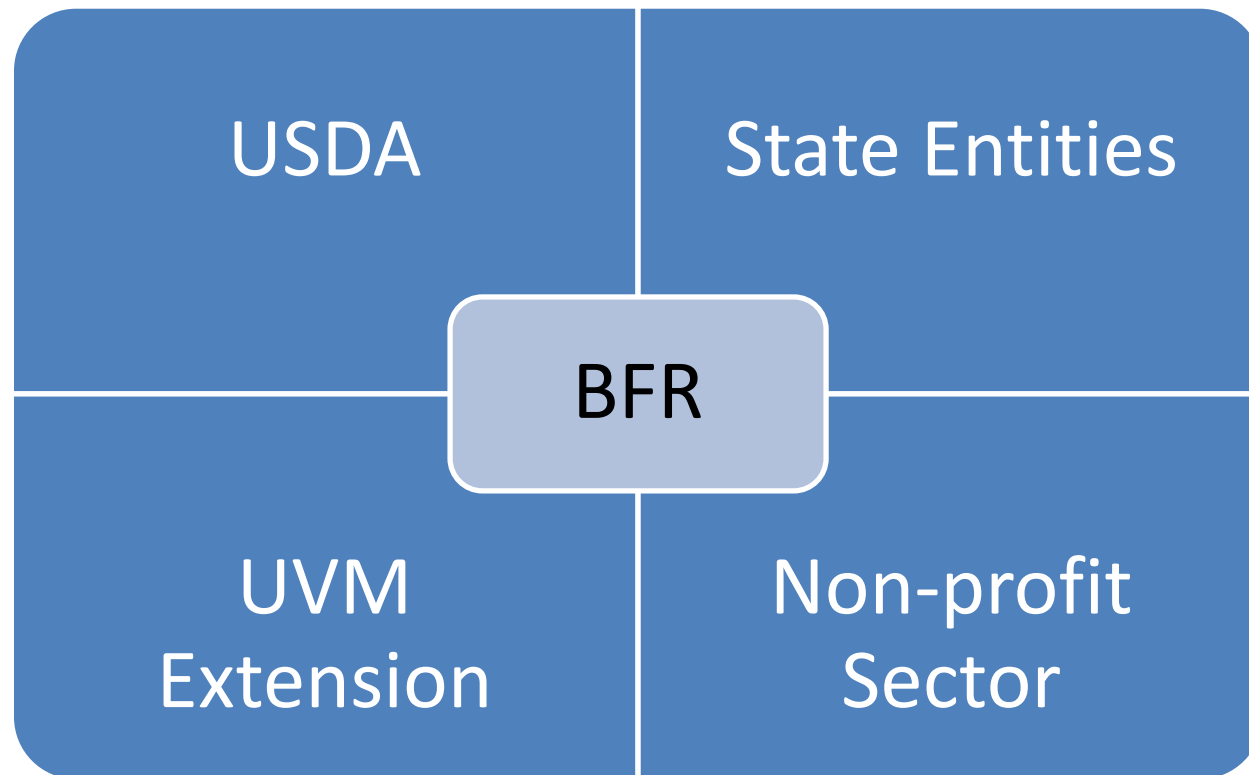
USDA New Farmer Website and Discovery Tool



<https://newfarmers.usda.gov/>

Stakeholder Support and Engagement

Work with partners to engage BFRs, conduct coordinated outreach and ensure availability of USDA information.



Vermont BFR Team

State Coordinator:

Elijah Massey, RD

elijah.massey@usda.gov

(802) 828-6081

State Champions:

Amy Overstreet, NRCS

amy.overstreet@usda.gov

Jill Thomas, FSA

jill.Thomas@usda.gov

Bill Ferris, RMA

william.ferris@usda.gov

